

## A STUDY ON MOTHER'S ATTITUDE TOWARDS TOY AS FOOD PREMIUM

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### ABSTRACT

Children have long been considered as consumers with considerable buying power. Thus, marketers target the child consumer directly with messages containing child-orientated content such as characters, toys, etc that represent fun. Since childhood is the age of curiosity they will be curious about each and everything they are experiencing. Once they get a toy they make repeat purchases just to collect all the sequences of the toys provided by the manufacturers. The study aims at examining the mother's attitude towards toy as food premium in Cochin City according to the relevant information and customer interactions. The study evaluates the perceptiveness of mothers and children in the toy as food premium. The data for the study were collected from 65 mothers having children of age group of 4-10 years from various parts of cochin city. Data collection comprises of primary data and secondary data. The primary data has been collected through questionnaire and secondary data from related journals, books and websites. Simple percentage method was used for the analysis. It is evident from the study that companies could work to make their children's meal more nutritious and their toy premium more educationally sound to please both parents and children.

**Keywords:** CHILDREN: Kids in the age group of 4- 10 years, FOOD: Any nutritious substance that people consume to maintain life and growth, PREMIUMS: Free toys or collectables attached to a food item, TOYS: An object, often a small representation of something familiar, as an animal or person, for children to play.

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Marketer's target the families for their promotion of products and services. The changing family patterns, shift from joint family to nuclear family, and exposure to socialization agents have changed the way the purchase decisions. Children play a significant role in the consumer market by influencing their parent's purchase decisions either for the products for family use or for their personal use. Owing to the role that children have in a purchase decision or the buying process, the focus of research has shifted to children.

Children have demands of their own, and they ask parents to fulfil their demands and in case demand is not fulfilled, they also make use of pester power. Pester power is defined as the nagging ability of the children in influencing their parents to fulfill their demands. Another

popular method is attracting the children is giving premiums with a food item. Premiums are the free toys or collectibles attached to a food item. Many a time, ethical concerns have been raised about the use of premiums for promoting products.

## 1.1 STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

The study analyzed the role premiums play in the selection of food items, and the source of information about toys as premium. The study also analyzes the attitude of children towards products with toys as premium and also the attitude of mothers towards the quality of toy premiums promoting unhealthy eating habits among kids.

## 1.2 OBJECTIVES

1. To find out the frequency of junk food demanded by children and the most popular food item among children.
2. To identify the most important sources of information for children.
3. To understand children's attitudes towards toy premium with the food product.
4. To understand the mother's perspective towards toy premium with the food product

## 1.3 SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

This project attempts to understand the attitude of children towards food items with toys as premium. On the other hand, we would also try to analyze the perspective of mothers towards food items with the toy as a premium. In this way, marketers would also be able to understand how they can make their products meet parents preferences and expectations.

## 1.4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study was confined to Cochin City. Data collection comprises of primary data and secondary data. The primary data was collected through questionnaires, which was distributed among the sample population of 65 mothers having children in the age group of 4 – 10 years. The Secondary data for the study were collected from various journals, books, articles, websites, etc. The questionnaire was based on the initial research model and propositions, and for understanding the attitude of children and mothers towards toy as premium with food items, the statements are adequately prepared. The statements were measured using a 5 – point Likert scale, where 1= strongly agree, 2 = agree, 3 = neutral, 4 = disagree, and 5 = strongly agree. The descriptive research design was used for the study. Convenience sampling technique (non-probability sampling) was used for this study.

## 2.0 CHAPTER TWO

### 2.1 Review of Literature

**Hastings et al. (2003)**, based on systematic reviews, highlighted that children were exposed to a great deal of promotion of unhealthy foods. Advertisements for breakfast cereals, confectionery, snacks, soft drinks, fast-food restaurants, and toys were frequently targeted at children. All these foods were high in fats, sugars, and salt and were harmful to the health of

children. Advertisements for healthy foods such as fresh fruits or vegetables were rarely broadcast on television. Zuppa et al. (2003), Neville et al. (2005), Palmer and Carpenter (2006), Cairns et al. (2009, 2013) and Ariana and Benazic (2011) further corroborated these findings.

**Harrison and Marske (2005)** classified food advertisements across the audience (child audience and general-audience). They found that overall, convenience/fast foods and candy/sweets/soft drinks were frequently advertised on television. Moreover, advertisements for candy/sweets/soft drinks were frequently targeted at children, while convenience foods were mainly directed at general-audience.

**Arnas (2006)** conducted a content analysis of 775 advertisements and found that nearly half of the advertisements broadcast on television were for foods. Advertisements for candy/chocolate, chips, milk and derivations of milk such as cheese and yoghurt and breakfast cereals were frequently broadcast on television. Thus, most of these advertised foods were unhealthy and contained a high level of fat, sugar, and salt. However, there were no advertisements for fruits/vegetables, legumes and eggs.

**Livingstone (2006)** drew on literature reviews originally commissioned from the author by the Office of Communications (Of Com). It was found that television advertising had a modest direct effect on children's food choices and most of the foods advertised on television were of high in fat, salt or sugar that caused the problem of obesity in children. The reason for giving more emphasis on television advertisements was a frequent increase in expenditure on food and beverage advertising using television in developed countries like the UK and the USA. This study also explained that television viewing was associated with frequent consumption of snacks, prepared meals and/or fast foods.

**Batada and Wootan (2007)** investigated the nutritional quality of the foods and beverages marketed by one of the largest television channels to children. It was found that a majority of beverages and restaurant meals marketed to children were of poor nutritional quality. The most commonly advertised foods were sugared cereals, fast-food restaurant items, and pastries. Out of 168 food advertisements, 88 percent were for poor nutritional quality foods. Only 11% of all food advertisements featured foods or meals with at least one-half serving of fruits or vegetables and 13 percent of all food advertisements featured foods that met the whole-grain criterion. A majority of marketed foods were high in fat, salt or sugars and few advertisements were for fruits, vegetables or whole grains. These findings were corroborated by Roberts and Pettigrew (2007).

**Kelly et al. (2007)** highlighted the pattern and prevalence of food and drink advertisements directed at children on commercial television in Australia. Data were collected by recording television advertisements on three commercial channels for 357 hours. Food advertisements were coded into three groups (core foods, high-fat/high-sugar foods and miscellaneous) using 18 food categories. The study revealed that a majority of food advertisements (48.6%) were of high-fat/high-sugar foods. Furthermore, children aged 5- 12 years were exposed to 96 food advertisements, including 63 high-fat/high sugar advertisements per week. Advertisements for a fast-food restaurant, confectionery, dairy products, bread, cereals, rice, and pasta were most frequently displayed on the television.

**Powell et al. (2007)** content analyzed 2, 24,083 advertisements viewed by children of age categories 2 to 11 years. They found that food advertisement comprised of 36.4% of all advertisements that were seen by children. Further, advertisements for cereals, sweets, snacks, beverages, fast food restaurants, non-fast food restaurants, and other foods were mainly shown on television. However, cereals were the most frequently advertised foods followed by fast-food restaurants and snacks. Powell et al. (2007b) assessed 2,38,353 television advertisements viewed by children of age band 12 to 17 years. They pointed out that food advertisements accounted for one-fifth of total advertisements shown on television. Fast food was the most frequently advertised food and it made up to 23 per cent of all food advertisements. Other advertisements that were frequently shown on television were for sweets, beverages, cereals, snacks, and non-fast food restaurant products. All these advertised products were within the reach of children's purchasing power.

**Galcheva et al. (2008)** provided a comprehensive assessment of the amount and type of TV food advertising directed at Bulgarian children. A content analysis of 371 commercials was conducted during 41.5 hours of children's TV programs, broadcast on three national TV stations—one public and two private. Out of 371 commercials, food/beverage advertisements accounted for one third (33.4%) of all commercials with a majority of commercials (96.8%) for unhealthy foods. More than half of advertisements (57%) were aimed specifically at children and the most frequently advertised products were salty/sweet-end snacks and cereals, sweet soft drinks/carbohydrates, juices, and foods high in salt. Advertisements for fruits or vegetables are rarely shown on television.

**Linn and Novosat (2008)** revealed that a majority of promoted foods targeted at children were energy-dense and contained less nutrition. They further found that children and youth consumers spent a huge amount of money on purchasing four categories of foods—candy and snack foods, soft drinks, fast foods, and cereals. All these foods were unhealthy and contain a high level of fat, sugar, and salt. Consumption of these foods in large portions is leading to the problem of obesity in children.

**Stitt and Kunkel (2008)** investigated that most of the time, low-nutrient and high-calorie foods were marketed to children. They further identified that the advertisements for fats/sweets, bread/cereals, and fast foods/restaurant foods were predominately directed at children. Moreover, nearly half of the food advertisements targeted at children were for sugared snacks and cereal products. In contrast, there were few advertisements for healthy foods such as dairy, fruits/vegetables, and proteins. After analyzing the nutritional quality of foods marketed to children, it was found that a majority of foods marketed to children were not according to dietary guidelines.

**Warren et al. (2008)** classified food advertisements across child-audience and general audience. They explored that out of total food advertisements, more than half food advertisements were targeted at child-audience and 49 percent were targeted at general-audience. Overall, foods that were frequently advertised on television included pizza/fast foods, sweets, breakfast foods, family restaurants meals and convenience foods. Similar patterns were observed for food advertisements targeted at child-audience and general-audience. However, the majority of these advertised foods are unhealthy.

**Huang et al. (2012)** conducted a content analysis of 1344 television advertisements shown during children's television programs in Singapore. They found that food advertisements accounted for 33 percent of all advertisements. Whereas, this percentage was quite high during weekdays (46 percent) and it increased up to 54 percent on weekends. Further, on an average 4.5 food advertisements were screened per hour. However, the frequency of appearing food advertisements per hour was quite high on weekends (7.0 food advertisements per hour) and it was more than twice of food advertisements shown on weekdays (3.2 food advertisements per hour). As regards the nature of advertised foods, overall, candy and confectionery were the most frequently advertised foods followed by retail food outlets and milk. Moreover, 45 percent of advertisements in retail food outlets were for fast foods. Thus, a majority of advertisements broadcast on children's television networks were for unhealthy foods. After that, a comparison of the nature of food advertisements shown during weekdays and weekends revealed that the frequency of screening unhealthy food advertisements per hour is more than twice on weekends than weekdays (4 than 1.8 unhealthy food advertisements per hour).

**Castonguay et al. (2013)** conducted a content analysis of 534 food advertisements broadcast during children's programming in the USA and found that nearly 7.6 food advertisements were shown per hour to target children. They further divided all food advertisements into nine categories namely fast foods, sugared cereals, salty snacks, dairy, pasta, sugared drinks, sugared snacks, restaurant foods, and others. The findings revealed that the most frequently advertised foods during children's programs were fast foods followed by sugared cereals and salty snacks. These food advertisements cumulatively comprise nearly three fourth of all food advertisements (73 percent) targeted at children. By comparing these advertised foods with "Go-Slow-Whoa" food rating system, which is used to evaluate the nutritional quality of foods and devised by the US Department of Health and Human Services (USDHHS), the interesting finding was that only 1 percent advertised foods targeted at children were most nutritious and classified as "Go" foods. Contrary to this, 27 percent of advertised foods were classified as "Slow" foods (contain high calories and some nutritional value) and a majority of advertised foods (72 percent) were categorized as "Whoa" foods (low-nutrient and calorie-dense) that should not be eaten regularly.

### 3.0 RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Simple percentage method is used for analyses of primary data

**Table I: Frequency of demand for junk food**

Demand for junk food	Frequency	Percentage
Daily	02	03.1
Once in a week	27	41.5
Once in 2 weeks	13	20.0
Once in a month	05	07.7
Occasionally	18	27.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table I shows the frequency of the demand for junk food, around 41.5% of the children demanded junk food once in a week, 3.1% demanded it daily, 20% demanded once in two weeks, 7.7 % demanded it once in a month, and 27.7 % demanded it occasionally. This indicates the popularity of junk foods among children. So it is clear that the majority of kids (41.5%) were demanding junk food once a week.

**Table II: Food Item with Toy as Premium Demanded the Most by Children**

Food item	Frequency	Percentage
Kinder Joy	34	52.3
Dairy milk in Lickables	13	20.0
Gems Surprise Ball	10	15.4
Kelloggs Chocos	02	03.1
Bingo No Rulz	06	09.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table II shows the most popular food item with the toy as premium among kids, Kinder Joy was found to be a favourite among children with more than 50% of the kids demand it the most. There is a small difference between the popularity of Dairy Milk in Lickables (20%) and Gems Surprise Ball (15.4 %). 9.2% of kids demanding Bingo No Rulz and only 3.1% to Kellogg’s Chocó’s.

**Table III: Sources of Information for Children**

Sources of information	Frequency	Percentage
Television Advertisements	40	61.5
Peers	08	12.3
School	05	07.7
Visit to store	12	18.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Television is the main source of information for children for food products with the toy as premium; 61.5% of children considered television as the most important source of information. Visit to the store was another important source for 18.5% of children as compared to peers (12.3%) and schools (7.7%). Children spend a lot of time watching television and are exposed to a lot of advertisements.

**Table IV: The Toy with Food Products is Useful for Kids**

	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative percentage
<b>Strongly agree</b>	2	3.1	3.1
<b>Agree</b>	6	9.2	12.3
<b>Neutral</b>	10	15.4	27.7
<b>Disagree</b>	28	43.1	70.8
<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	19	29.2	100



<b>Total</b>	65	100	
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Table IV shows whether the toy with food products is useful for kids.70.8% of mothers disagreed that toy with food products are useful for kids but 12.3% of mothers are agreeing to this statement.

**Table V: Attitude of children towards premiums**

Scales	(A) Your child select the product with toy as premium over the other product		(B) Your child like toy more than food item		(C) Toy with food product is the main attraction for the selection of the product		(D) Your child gave more importance to premium than quality of food		(E) Your child may buy the product for the toy even if he or she doesn't consume the producer		(F) Children gets disappointed if they don't get the toy of their choice		(G) The child gets angry if his/her demand is not fulfilled	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
<b>Strongly agree</b>	33	50.8	25	38.5	43	66.1	32	49.2	24	36.9	38	58.5	34	52.3
<b>Agree</b>	13	20	20	30.8	13	20	10	15.4	13	20	7	10.8	15	23.1
<b>Neutral</b>	10	15.4	10	15.4	7	10.8	8	12.3	10	15.4	9	13.8	10	15.4
<b>Disagree</b>	9	13.8	9	13.8	2	3.1	15	23.1	15	23.1	8	12.3	5	7.7
<b>Strongly disagree</b>	0	0	1	1.5	0	0	0	0	3	4.6	3	4.6	1	1.5
<b>Total</b>	65	100	65	100	65	100	65	100	65	100	65	100	65	100

The attitude was measured using a 5 – point Likert scale, where 1 means strongly agree and 5 means strongly disagree. When asked whether the child would select the product with a premium over the other product, 70.8% of others either strongly agreed or agreed to it. Children were more interested in opening the toy than the food product, and this was confirmed by 69.3 % of respondents, with 38.5% of the mothers strongly agreeing to it. Toy with the food product is the main attraction for the selection of a particular product –out of the sample size of 65 mothers, 86.1% of the mothers agreed to this statement. The quality of food is not that important for kids. They don't understand that the toys are tools in the hands of marketers for promoting their products. They are more concerned about the toy they would be getting with the food product; 49.2% of the mothers strongly agreed to the statement that children gave more importance to the premiums than to the quality of food products. Children get angry if their demands are not fulfilled, and they even feel disappointed in case they don't get the toy of their choice. They even make use of pester power in getting their demand fulfilled. Toys are such an attraction for children that they may buy the products with the toy even if they don't consume a particular product. Marketers use the toy as a tool to attract children so that they may buy products. Children have a very positive attitude towards the toy premium and they feel happy to have the toy along with the product. The toy premium is a

very important factor that is taken into consideration while selecting the product to be consumed.

**Table VI: Attitude of mothers towards premium**

Scales	(A) Toys can distract the interest of the child towards the toy and child can lose interest in food		(B) Children are tantalized by clever promotional campaigns		(C) Marketers take advantage of the vulnerability of children		(D) The premium with a food product promotes unhealthy eating habits among kids		(E) The child is interested in the toy only for a short period of time	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
<b>Strongly agree</b>	44	67.7	36	55.4	39	60	44	67.7	44	67.7
<b>Agree</b>	10	15.4	20	30.8	17	26.2	14	21.6	13	20
<b>Neutral</b>	5	7.7	5	7.7	4	6.1	4	6.1	6	9.2
<b>Disagree</b>	4	6.1	3	4.6	5	7.7	2	3.1	2	3.1
<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	2	3.1	1	1.5	0	0	1	1.5	0	0
<b>Total</b>	65	100	65	100	65	100	65	100	65	100

When mothers were asked about their attitude towards toy as premiums with food items, the mothers responded the toy can distract the interest of the child towards toy and children can lose interest in the food products; 54 out of 65 mothers either strongly agreed or agreed to this statement. Children gave more attention to the toy that they will be getting with the food than to the food product. The mothers were also of the opinion that the children were tantalized by clever promotional strategies of marketers, 86.2% mothers agreeing to the statement. They felt that the marketers use premiums as a tool to attract children so that they may demand and pester their parents to get their demands fulfilled. Marketers take advantage of the vulnerability of children and this was the view of 56 mothers felt that the premium with food products promotes unhealthy eating habits among children. They also agreed to the statement that children are interested in the toy only for a short period, with 44 mothers (67.7%) strongly agreeing and 13 (20%) agreeing to this statement. The toy has no use over a longer period.

#### 4.0 CONCLUSION

The purpose of the study is to analyze the role of premiums play in the selection of food items and frequency in using junk food and the source of information about the toy as premium. The study also analyzed the attitude of children towards products with the toy as premium and also the attitude of mothers towards the quality of the toy premiums promoting unhealthy eating habits among kids.



Premiums play a very important role in the selection of food products by children. They were more interested in premiums than in food products. Mothers, on the other hand, were concerned about the unhealthy eating habits and quality of premiums. Mothers were of the view that educational and creative toys should be provided with the food products. The marketers should also use premiums for promoting healthy food products.

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